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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Jose and Okayama, Japan Kick Off 50th Anniversary of Sister City Relationship

*Golden anniversary includes diverse cultural, academic, ceremonial and
business celebration and collaboration*

SAN JOSE, CALIF.—(April 25, 2007)—The four-day 50th anniversary celebration of the sister city affiliation between San Jose, California, and Okayama, Japan, begins 1 p.m., Friday, April 27, with a ceremonial flag-raising, hosted by San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed and includes Shigeo Takaya, Mayor of Okayama, and more than 300 members of a multi-generational delegation from Okayama and the San Jose Police and Fire Honor Guards, at San Jose City Plaza, 200 E. Santa Clara Street. The public is invited to attend this free event.

One of the earliest sister city relationships in the U.S., the San Jose-Okayama association had its nexus at a White House conference in 1956 when then President Dwight Eisenhower had the goal to build people-to-people relationships to grow long-lasting peace and cross-cultural understanding. Fifty years ago, San Jose and Okayama began their sister city relationship due to their agriculture and economic similarities. As both regions grew, their economic base followed suit and diversified. Today, both cities are metropolitan hubs and remain part of the sister city program administered by Sister Cities International, a citizen diplomacy network creating and strengthening partnerships between the U.S. and communities.

The program also led to the first student exchange partnership with Okayama University and San Jose State University in 1959. San Jose State University now has a bilateral program available to juniors and seniors who would like to study in Okayama. And, a similar program exists for Okayama University students.

“Konnichi wa! I warmly welcome Mayor Takaya and his delegation to San Jose on this auspicious occasion of the 50-year union between San Jose and Okayama. We celebrate today the commitment of our people to forge meaningful cross-cultural friendships and partnerships that have promoted the economic and social interests of our two cities. The San Jose City Council and I have unanimously pronounced April 24-May 1st Okayama Week in San Jose and hope your visit will further the good intentions of our sister-city objectives,” said Reed.

Arriving from Japan the morning of April 27 via a chartered JAL Boeing 747 at San Jose’s Mineta International Airport, the delegation will include business, academic and trade leaders as well as elected officials, students and Okayama residents.

After the flag-raising ceremony, San Jose hosts the group to a reception and briefing, 1:45 p.m., Friday, April 27. The briefing will be led by San Jose City Councilmember Forrest Williams, who has resided in Japan and speaks Japanese.

The group then tours San Jose's Japanese Friendship Garden—originally modeled after the Okayama's famed Korakuen Gardens. A new gate was built in part by funds donated by the citizens of Okayama following the 40th anniversary the San Jose-Okayama affiliation—at 4:00 p.m., Kelley Park, 1300 Senter Road, where the delegation will visit the commemorative gate, presented to San Jose by Okayama.

At 5:30 p.m., they will enjoy a barbeque at the San Jose Municipal Stadium, 588 East Alma Avenue, followed at 7 p.m. by a baseball game between the San Jose Giants and the High Desert Mavericks—both Class A minor league teams.

Saturday, April 28 will be highlighted by tours of the Children's Discovery Museum and the Winchester Mystery House—San Jose's most visited tourist attraction.

The evening will be capped by a gala reception and dinner, 6:15 p.m., Saturday, April 28, San Jose City Hall Rotunda.

On Sunday, April 29, the delegation will attend the 30th annual Nikkei Matsuri, Japanese American Cultural Festival, held in San Jose's Japantown, Fifth and Jackson Streets. Nikkei Matsuri means 'Japanese American festival.' Nikkei Matsuri was one of several ethnic community celebrations planned for the City of San Jose's Bicentennial celebration. This event was so successful, that the festival has persisted since then and continues to be a day long festival of foods, performing arts, cultural exhibits and arts and crafts with the goal of sharing and appreciating Japanese American culture in the heart of San Jose's Japantown.

At 7 p.m., Okayama Youth Orchestra and the San Jose Youth Symphony's Philharmonic Orchestra will perform a "Side-by-Side Concert," at the San Jose Repertory Theatre, 101 Paseo de San Antonio.

The next part of the celebration takes a decidedly business turn as the San Jose/Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Japanese American Chamber of Commerce of Silicon Valley and the Japantown Business Association join the City in sponsoring a San Jose/Okayama, Japan Business Seminar, 8-10:30 a.m., Monday, April 30, 2007, San Jose City Hall, Council Wing, 200 East Santa Clara Street, Rooms 118-120. The seminar will cover a range of topics, including: 1) investigating trade, investment, partnership opportunities with Japanese firms; 2) recognizing the importance of business culture issues in international business; 3) how failing in business start-ups can lead to later successes. There will also be the opportunity to network with a 30-member business delegation from Okayama. The event is free. For more information contact:

economic.development@sanjoseca.gov.

The business delegation will then tour Silicon Valley's Lockheed Martin facility, 1111 Lockheed Martin Way, Sunnyvale, and San Jose's Cisco Systems, Inc., 300 E. Tasman Drive.

The day will end with a 5 p.m. reception and dinner hosted by the Japanese American Chamber of Commerce of Silicon Valley, Coyote Creek Golf Club, One Coyote Creek Golf Drive in San Jose.

Another group, comprised of representatives from non-government organizations (NGOs), will take part in meetings with San Jose NGOs. Additionally, Okayama University officials will meet with the representatives from San Jose State University Research Foundation and the US Market Access Center.

For more information, visit, www.sj-okayama.org.

About the City of San Jose's Office of Economic Development

The City of San Jose's Office of Economic Development (OED) is committed to a vital, competitive San Jose economy that increases prosperity for people and companies and enhances City revenues. The Office guides the City's economic strategy, provides assistance for business success, helps connect employers with trained workers, and provides art, sporting and cultural resources to our community. For more information, please visit, www.sjeconomy.com.

About the City of San Jose

From its founding in 1777 as California's first city, San Jose has been a leader, driven by its spirit of innovation. Today, San Jose stands as the largest city in Northern California and the Capital of Silicon Valley—the world's leading center of innovation. The city, the 10th largest in the U.S., is committed to remaining a top-ranked place to do business, work, live, play and learn. For more information, visit, www.sanjoseca.gov.

About Sister Cities International

Representing more than 2,500 communities in 137 countries, Sister Cities International (www.sister-cities.org) is a citizen diplomacy network creating and strengthening partnerships between the U.S. and communities abroad. Begun in 1956 after a White House summit where U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower called for people-to-people exchanges, sister city partnerships are tailored to local interests and increase global cooperation at the grassroots level. Sister Cities International promotes peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation by focusing on sustainable development, youth and education, arts and culture, humanitarian assistance and economic growth programs.

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